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NANSEN.

A Poem

BY

REGINALD C. ROBBINS

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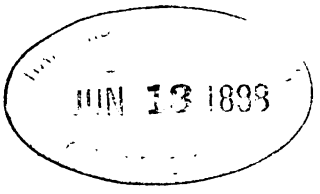

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"'Mid ice and night onward and onward: ice,
Night unresisted heaving on and on
Though motiveless yet mightily my life
In passion of the pack; pressing on, on
From nought through nought: no-progress; passage proved
Prison; persistence, powerlessness: or Pole
Or no Pole, equal impotence! In patience
My soul sees, even in impotence, fulfill'd
The prophecy that built, equipt, launch'd forth
Her foresight. Yea; this power, this thrust and stress
At bend and burst broad, loud below in the bleak,
My heart holds; comprehends; conclusively
Bursts beyond, thrusts down, down and bounds above
In freedom of buoyancy. My ship, my soul
Are motive; are sun and strength beyond aught here!

"Passion and patience of the universe,
Doom'd to this dead, eternal ice and night!
From nought through nought and nowhere any end;
No bourne to passage, strength to patience none;
Motive to life nor any life save death:
Moon, and these myriad stars moon-dead to-be!—
Yet: what of this that knows, that wills an end,
This God-I-Am: for-whom, through-whom, in-whom
Alone are ice and night and any thing:
This strength-of-suffering, power of life-through-death;
Prophet, transcendence of the darkness here?
Something, through uttermost of ice and night,
Will that I question fact; unfelt before
Somewhat essential beyond ice or night
Questions the doom; demands, if there be life
In-me and through-me, how may death persist,
Ice and night so entomb earth's truth-to-be?
World ceases not, though I cease or not-cease!
What of world's soul that comprehends; concludes
Together nought with nought; proves passage, bourne;
Chaos yet cosmos, sentient-systeming:
Moon-dearth but sensible by strength of sun;
Strength endless, being criterion of end?

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What of the Self to science' selflessness:
Spirit to substance of world's ice and night? —
Hegel or Kelvin? Kant-with-Christ or—what? —
Lo! in this bitterly blank night, the breeze
Blistering this breast to bleak frigidity;
Here above bellowing ice-blocks, stark aloft
At masthead 'mid these thorn'd tormenting stars,
This vinegar, this mockery of moon:
Must I alone this hour sweat through this passion
Of intellectual agony made mine;
Wrestle, resolve (so crucified my soul
Vicar for this dumb-arctic eloquence)
World's problem of perpetuance, of power:
In truth's name how an universe can be! —
I, so be intellect for deaf and dead,
Savior for snows that scarce can think or speak,
Christ for the ice and night: to prove for these
Philosophy or science, faith or fact: —
Conclusion foregone that I speak as Christ
Speaking their self best in this self of mine,
Speaking myself best in the self of these:
By sympathy a faith — not selfless fact:
An intellectual-conscience, scarce machine!

"Yet, it is new, this union; till this hour
Unrealized; till this night precluded quite
By full acceptance of the selfless fact:
Sheer science: Kelvin, Huxley! — Christ or Kant
Left out of count now, first the formal, fair
Rehearsal of the fact! —
"To clutch a shroud;
Shake with the strong wind streaming; ramp and rock
With sufferance of the vessel shocked; upheaved
With every blasting of the bleak below.
'Tis to be fact for facts; be buffeted
As block beats block; be wail'd-on by the wind.
Above, the boreal auroras; broad
Beyond, about, below, the bleak, blown packs
Sunless as senseless. To be one of these.
Ay: and how comes it to be one of these?
Review the history, sum up the law
Of evolution — nebula to now:

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The progress such and such; geogeny,
Biogeny, psychogeny; the chain
From nebula to now: and every new
Born out of old. And flesh, this organ'd mass
Nerved, sinew'd, draws descent direct, distinct
From nebula; is substance as the stars,
Substance as ice and night: and one with these.
Ay, though be ice, night, moon, but equally
With sunshine, quickening vapor metaphor
For death or life: their real identity
Nor death nor life, but force, fate: yet are these —
The less, the more — equal inanity
Of fact's necessity: 'Self,' one of these;
Phenomenon of nerve-phenomena,
Some sheer spontaneous sentience of a 'world'
Was not, nor shall be: actual world none less,
Indifferent, independent, nerve or nought:
Intelligence or non-intelligence
Indifferent to existence of the fact.
Ay, this 'world-overweighting' of the brain,
This 'passionate, transcendent ponderance
Of soul,' this critical compendiousness
Of 'mind' o'er matter, 'Christhood,' 'vicarage,'
This 'saviorship of union'd intellect
Its agonied redemption'; were but beats
Of the ganglion, nerve-tissued blow on blow,
Shaking and surging of the plasmic cells
At sweat and ramp and rage of bursting blood;
This 'God-I-Am' some subtlest ice or night
Blow for blow, burst for burst the same in sort
As bellowing ice-pack and this boreal blast:
Nerve, native as the nebula: no-soul!
Such are the facts to test and find them true;
No link disjuncted: perfect in the proof.
And, for the logic of all law is such,
Must man with world come to the doom at last —
Kelvin's and Huxley's — with the spent machine:
With tendence moonward from the might of stars:
Space-dissipation of world's energy
To ice and night, no-meaning. From the first
Even this surge from nebula to now
Nought but a space-dissemination, loss

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Of energy-potential kinetized
Toward equilibrium: equilibrium
But nothingness, no-force, non-end inane:
Moon, nought save shown in sloth of swooning sun.
And if, in such dissemination, 'soul'
(Nice nerve-vibration) over and beyond
The grosser substance chemical gain growth
And power organic over and beyond
The less-organic; stands the law the same:
Such and such from the nebula to now
Mere evolution of the nerve from vague
Chaos through energy kinetic, sun
And star and sphere on sphere, through molten mass,
Rock-metal, vegetation, sinew'd flesh
To man's brain: and from now back, back to night,
Cold crystalline benumbing up of nerve
In cosmical pulsation: now from man
Back to chill'd coalescence organless,
Lifeless conglomeration: ice and night!—
Ha! the stars stab, the bellowing below
Mocks to the marrow! Unto ice and night
Dedicate nerve's destruction! Now, to-night
(What of the years of the world if years yield nought?)
Now, to-night end all; headlong to the doom
Dash on the blank pack's bosom: far below
Beat brain out: end the agony! In name
Of Kelvin, Huxley, now, to-night I leap:
Anticipate, make mine the doom of all!—

"Mine? Mine the doom of all! I hesitate;
Hold breath; breathe deep this agony of air:
Make it my blood and feel it mine! I am!
Life is what means it to be one of these!—
Alive; I-am; nebula, nerve or night;
Necessitating future still as past
More and more, past as future, each in each!
World ceases not: nor I cease. World I am!—
And it is new, this union: yet by will
To end all proved, made perfect endlessly
In intellectual action: Christ-with-Kant!—
Faith for the facts! Feel faith and find fact truth!

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"This logic of life-origin, this law
Of link'd necessity? Can link by link
Interminably link'd explain one life?
Mere mutuality, one molecule
Save as the mutual mean identity:
My-life, or molecule, an union'd world?
Ay; in such sort: if just this self of mine —
God-mechanician to their made machine,
Else unmechanic mere nonentity! —
Hypothesized yet unexplain'd remain
(Hardly residuum, scarce for fact beyond)
Still for true source, being synthesis, of these,
Conscience and explanation, linkage, law —
(Sunlike to shrinkage of moon soulless else!) —
Not cause, yet all-causation; through and through
Immanence and intelligence of all
Else lawless, linkless, unionless, inane:
Self-ideality of each through each;
Each for-itself forselfness even as I,
Identified in me as selfhood all:
The molecule-in-man, man-molecule;
Native reality: and only so
Real at all, molecule or man, for-me:
Past, future, none less instant, self-for-self,
Real union, sentience each; though yet for-me
Polar, unmeaning save as union'd now.
Ay; that I am, I am: all else in-me
(As I in-them, through-them, by mutual proof —
How else, conceived empirics-error, save
World's self-assertion, countervail'd to mine,
Insofarforth show Self neutrality?)
Through-me make mutuality of self
Distinct, determinate, dividual
Yet individual universally.
All that I am, I am: this world-of-mine;
This universe: alive by saviorship,
(Monad or motive) Christhood-vicarage!
Development-proved-world-dissipation proves
By world-retort a false criterion,
Half-standard contradictory: proves worth
Of absolute process, progress-regressive
In pure polarity self-reconciled

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Evolving, mind from matter, most from least.
Law, from the nucleus to now, but time
Of self's maturing: ever to mature:
Even in the space-dissemination, time's
Ingathering of momentum; human mind
O'er mental-nebula progressive still
In mutual-internality of lore,
Even as o'er physical man the molecule
Nebular stood, still stands preëminent
In property-material of force
Extern, displacement substantive; alike
Materio-mental, least and most: one Soul
Erst nebular, now nebular-humane;
Ubiquitous, being all-self-spatialized;
Eternal, being all-temporality:
Mine erst, mine now, mine still eternally;
By perpetuity-through-passingness
(This perfectness of process) nebula
To now, yet now by being but nebular
(Past and to-come but poles of permanence):
Eternally my universe humane!—
Is it, world-mutuality may end?
Yet mutual how, save well aware through each,
Alive each molecule—that may not end,
Being each for-self criterion of end,
World-mutuality in-self alone?—
Ice and night, 'ice' and 'night' (man's metaphor
For end-unmeaning, dead) but humanly;
Ice yet for-ice, night yet for-night, humane
In selfhood nebular-molecular:
Moon yet for-moon as sun for-sun, one world—
(Transcending metaphor) each molecule!—
Union'd, processional unendingly—
Soul not above, beyond; but immanent
Self-reference, intelligence through all!

"Lo! for behalf of such as scarce may speak,
Lo! for life's ice and night, life laughs at loss:
Takes truth from lightning of the blank below:
Spurns space-dissemination: in despite
Turns law to law's impassion'd intellect
Proved in performance of my ship, my soul

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Their prophecy, foresighted impotence!
Lo! proved in the patience under pressure, power
Of passive Pole-persistency (extreme
Passion of logic push'd to point), behold
Motived preëminence of manhood-plan
O'er potency less-mental; o'er the bleak
Ice and night I for vicar proving world
Processive, though pulsation'd: I by proof
Lifting the lost to life's intelligence;
Fact-science to philosophy by faith.
What of the equlibrium, inane
Frosting of nerve to nothingness? By pace
Equal, if opposite, above, beyond
The physical degeneration steps
The 'psychic' subtlety: nor moon nor star
Shows soul-futurity, save star or moon
In spirit equal-born!—And I north, north
Push, overpower, soul-overweight their world
Of space-passivity; their extreme verge
Of sphere yet union'd Pole through zone, yet proved
Axial, self-orbited—being but motived more
Pass on the lamp of light, cramp boundaries,
Burst and break down the barriers (limit proved
Barrier but by bursting); limitless
Lead on the more-than-human mind-to-come
In conquest of physic's frigidity;
More and more conquer'd, spurn'd beyond, the more
Frosted in deadness of new ice and night.—
Ay; and in conquest more and more shall world
(Or human or some supra-human nerve,
Some more-than-nerve) by reconciling more
More comprehend, include and lift to light
The 'deadness' and the 'darkness'; more and more
Shall time to-come, immanent-now, make now
An explanation and intelligence
By selfhood.—As my selfhood, savior now
Springs forth in fire abroad, auroral, vast
From stiffening of this Christhood on the cross
Stark aloft! From the vicarage complete
(Torment of stars or mockery of moon;
This intellectual agony made mine);
Eternal principle of every end—

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Christ for the ice and night, redeeming these! —
For whom alone meaning or end may be:
World-saviorship that shall not end! —
"I rave?
Drunk with the drench of drouth, of death? I freeze? —
Ha! the skies scoff! I still am doom'd in dream:
Man, with the dead-eternal ice and night."

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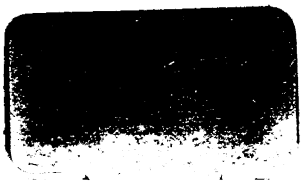
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